

WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 1918.

News, Views and Intimate Gossip from the Realm of the Stage and Screen

Theater Managers Become Amateurs Through Wartime Conditions of the Stage

By THE PLAYGOER.

War has made amateurs of us all. I don't know whether that line is original or not—if it isn't, I must let it go without credit, for I don't remember where I heard it. But it is a great truth and from it can be gleaned some idea of the enormity of the conflict which is moving the world at this time.

You may have thought you knew your business, your art or your profession—but with the coming of the war you find yourself running loose in new channels, hitherto unexplored. You had become a professional through a certain knowledge of things normal—you are an amateur because all that was normal isn't. And you just run, gyrate in circles, and experiment, hoping that you will hit some happy solution in spite of your ignorance. Fortunately most of us are more than holding our own—because the other fellow is in just the same predicament, and the fact that there is a supercirculation of coin is lifting us, on the financial plane.

Watching for the Jump.

If there is any one industry to which the foregoing applies more than to any other, it is the stage, for here is the real indicator of the public's pulse. Like a seismograph the stage reflects and records the slightest disturbance of the public's nerve cells. And in trying to anticipate which way the nerves will quiver, theatrical managers are running the entire gamut, looking for that brand of entertainment that will lure, hold and survive.

And they are proving themselves amateurs in their own line. As usual there are a number who explain the condition of the stage by frankly admitting that the game is going to the "dogs," but others are saying nothing and trying by every means they know to grasp the happy combination that will leave a surplus in the box office after the war tax is paid.

Naturally the first thought that came with the war was war plays, most of which were distinct failures, principally because the horror of war was made the uppermost theme. But with these failures there came experience, and now we are having the different sort of war play—that which treats of the lighter and romantic side. Of the latter variety shining, successful examples can be cited in "Billeted," "Lilac Time," and "General Post" the first two of which have been seen here.

Barrie Has the Right Idea.

Sir James M. Barrie also found the right sort of war plays in his three playlets that were seen at the National several weeks ago. Barrie found the human side of war—the home, and not the trench. In fact the real need of wartime amusement might be found in one line taken from his "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," in which the husky Scotch soldier back from the trenches on a furlough, says, "Wot the men in the trenches want is 'Chiffin'."

Turning from war plays, managers tried comedies, but the proportion of success was no more than normal. One outstanding feature of last season was "Turn to the Right," which though old as the hills in plot, nevertheless brought new strength and freshness to the stage.

And then it was musical comedies, with those of the intimate nature like "Hitchy Koo," "Oh, Boy" and "You're in Love" receiving the best support. These were a new sort of musical comedy and soldiers and sailors flocked to see them. With these successes registered, it was not long before every manager, with the possible exception of Belasco, was exploring the musical field.

Dimpling Knees Demanded.

Some said the people wanted clean, youthful fun; others said it wanted high kicking and dimpling knees, this despite Percy Hammond's assertion that a "knee is a joint, not an entertainment." And the youthful fun and the dimpling knees were ladled out most generously, and then late in October there came, "Chu Chin Chow," an extravagant spectacle with nothing intimate about it unless it is the costumes of some of the women. It was an immediate success, playing to capacity even in so large a theater as the Manhattan Opera House. In fact, late reports from New York announce that it is going into the Century, the stage palace just acquired by Elliott, Comstock & Gest from Dillingham & Zeigfeld.

The success of this spectacle started discussion again, and there the matter stands. What sort of amusement does the public want in war time? Drama, tragedy, comedy, farce and musical entertainment all have been tried—bad ones have failed, good ones have succeeded. After all, isn't this the history of every other theatrical season? We think that a bit of old theatrical philosophy is particularly apropos just now, "it is always a bad season for a bad play."

This Week's Playbills

National—"The Riviera Girl."
Tomorrow night, intact from its long successful run in the metropolis, Klaw & Erlanger's "The Riviera Girl," will be the notable attraction at the National. Besides the six night performances there will be matinees on Wednesday and Saturday.

"The Riviera Girl," which is the work of the same clever trinity that produced "Miss Springtime," also exploited by Klaw & Erlanger, Bolton-Woodhouse-Kalman, is quite generally conceded to be superior to even that most charming musical comedy which Washington has seen. Certainly in its gorgeous acrobatic settings "The Riviera Girl" is far superior to its earlier companion, for this well-known firm of theatrical producers is constantly trying to outdo its own efforts, and each of its ventures is more costly than the one before. "The Riviera Girl" has been described as the last word in this pleasing style of entertainment, and expense has not stood in the way of making it so. The cost of its production runs up into extraordinary figures. Joseph Urban, whose scenic marvels are familiar to Washington through "Miss Springtime," is responsible for the settings of this which are veritable dreams of color and beauty, and represent the very pinnacle of his art. Herbert Greham has directed the elaborate production. Julian Mitchell has lent his skilled hand to the many fetching dances and ensembles.

In "The Riviera Girl" the composer has reached a superior height to that he attained so happily in "Miss Springtime," and he has thrown a glamour of luxury tinged with moonlight poetry about the throbbing life of gay Monte Carlo. Joseph Urban has been inspired by the rich, melodious score, and has keyed his scenes to the velvet, impenetrable blue of the Mediterranean. This extraordinary combination of color and harmony is one of irresistible beauty.

Just an inkling of the plot gives an idea of the many ingenious situations woven throughout it. The scenes are all laid in Monte Carlo, and the story deals with the adventures of Sylvia Varsake, a singer, of whom the son of a proud and haughty nobleman is enamored. Fearing dishonor if he marries a plebeian singer, he arranges her union with an impetuous noble-

man in order that she may immediately secure a divorce, whereupon her title will make her eligible to marry his family. His plan miscarries, for the supposed poverty-stricken count turns out to be really a prince who from the first has loved Sylvia, and she in turn falls in love with him.

The big organization of \$9 that has appeared so successfully in "The Riviera Girl" at the New Amsterdam Theater in New York for months will be brought by Klaw & Erlanger to the National intact and in this admirable company will be found Wilda Bennett, Sam B. Hardy, Juliette Day, Carl Gantvoort, Louis Cassavant, Viola Cain, Arthur Burckley, Marjorie Bent, Eugene Lockhart, James Clarence Harvey, Frank Farrington, and other well-known performers, including a very large dancing and singing contingent of exceptionally pretty girls. The orchestra, which has been lauded by the press of this and other cities for its worth, its humor, its lyrics and its good music.

Of the song numbers the motif song, "You're in Love," is exceedingly catchy and will cling to memory long after the play has been forgotten. Of the other good airs there is one entitled "Love Land," by the prima donna, in which the refrain is sung to one of the most pretty stage pictures by the entire musical staff of the National.

Another charming song, "I Am Only Dreaming," is effectively rendered by a young girl swung out over the heads of the audience on a ship's boom and elicits much favorable comment. Other songs, "Snatched From the Cradle While Asleep," "Buck Up," "Things You Must Not Do" and "He Will Understand," deserve special mention. Then there is a dance by a young lady rendered most gracefully, entitled "The Dance to the Rose," also a series of dances and picturesque scenes by two terpsichorean artists of eminence.

There will be a popular matinee during this engagement, and as the entire cast of both principals and chorus is



Here You Have Their Numbers

1. Arthur Burckley and a group of Riviera girls from "The Riviera Girl," at the National this week.
2. Seven reasons why "You're in Love," to be shown at the Belasco this week.
3. Theodore Kosloff and Natacha Rambova, at B. F. Keith's this week.
4. Lillian Crossman, a popular member of the Poli Musical Comedy Players.
5. Pauline Frederick, who is featured in a new photoplay at Loew's Columbia this week.
6. Edna Goodrich in a scene from "Her Second Husband," at Moore's Garden.
7. Grace Valentine, in "Babbling Tongues," coming to Moore's Strand.

Identical with the presentation of this charming melodious fun play, here earlier in the season, this engagement should be the most successful of the season.

B. F. Keith's—Vaudeville.

This week at B. F. Keith's Theater will see the famous Russian premier dancer, Theodore Kosloff, formerly of the Diaghileff Ballet Russe and the associate and opposite dancer of Pavlova. Heading his own Imperial Russian Ballet and Orchestra, M. Kosloff is surrounded by Miles, Fredowa, Rambova, Maslova and Huskoff, and Mona Verlainova, Ivanoff, Madelevina and Ivan. The presentation consists of ten interpretations of the famous compositions of the ancient and modern masters of music.

The extra added stellar attraction will be the distinguished American actor, Robert T. Haines, and company in his very recent success, "The One Way Out," by Robert Garland. Third in order will be those ever-lasting favorites, Pat Rooney and Marion Bent, in their fresh escapades, "Up Town," in which the eccentric Rooney legs act in their looniest way. Separating from Blossom Seeley, to whose studio act they contributed no small share of the success she won, Bill Bailey and Lynn Cowan. "The Banjo-Kester and the Songster," are on their own and offering "The Sons of Syncope." The big organization of \$9 that are returning with more Brennan "Nittynonsense." Joe Cook, the pre-tan furr-maker, will submit his original concept, "The One-Man Vaudeville Show." Others well known and capable are Alfred Borfen, the eminent concert barytone; Jack McLellan and May Carson, the roller-skating experts, in "Pain du Blanc et Noir," the pipe organ recitals and the Hearst-Pathe news pictorial and real war films.

Poli—"When Love Is Young."
"When Love Is Young," a musical play of love and cannons, is the interesting title of Rida Johnson Young's military musical comedy, vocalized from the romantic play, "The Boys of Company B." This will be the third big offering of the Poli Musical Comedy Players.

Naturally "When Love Is Young" abounds in set to entrancing melodies and diverting dialogue and repartee. And now and then the piece is punctuated by laughter, and satire that makes it a comedy. That part of the plot that was permitted to live—For Producer Simpson has been ordered to do plots to death has to do with the love of a young man for a maid. Know the young man has a rival in the person of an Englishman, and the man, the maid and the Englishman proceed to their lovers' wiles in the gymnasium of a roof garden, in New York, of course. A great deal happens on this roof, all that was set down in Rida Young's book and more that equally fertile minds have injected into the piece.

That lovers are most attractive in military attire is handsomely set forth in the next act. This scene is laid in a National Guard camp. "The Girl's home is close by the camp, and she and a goodly company of feminine companions make war on this camp with cupid's darts, and with it all principals and ensemble score more than 1,000 hits at the target of mirth and melody.

All the big favorites of the Poli organization will be in the cast, including George Nathanson, Billy Lynn, Jack Squire, Law Powers, Ralph

Nicholls, Clarence Lydston, Ralph Mackenzie, Fred DeMar, Louise Mink, Sarah Edwards, Lillian Crossman, Eulalie Young, Elsie Bartlett, Ann Walby, Ada Burke, Ethel Cutter and others.

Gaiety—Burlesque.

Fred Irwin's big show opens its week's engagement at the Gaiety Theater today and promises an entertainment that will prove a departure from existing standards. "Bill" is the title of the two-act musical travesty which is presented in twelve scenes and it may be said in explanation that the Bill referred to is no less a personage than William Shakespeare, whom the author of the book causes to return to this earthly sphere in search of fresh inspiration. Although at first skeptical, he is soon convinced of the ability of the Twentieth century to furnish new ideas.

Leo Hayes, eccentric comedian; Sam Bachon, Billy Wainwright, Harry Howe and George Wong provide the laughs and introduce some good dance numbers. The women who are featured are Virginia Irwin, Adele Anderson, Grace Estelle, Helen Andrews and others who sing and dance well. One of the big features is Samoroff and Sonia and their dogs, King, Wong & King, acrobats, also offer an unusual specialty during the performance. The musical program includes exactly twenty-nine numbers and many of them are exclusive with this company. Among them may be mentioned "All Dotted Up," "I'm the King," "Oh, You Mississippi," and "I'd Like to Call You Sweetheart."

Loew's Columbia—Pauline Frederick.
Pauline Frederick will be seen at Loew's Columbia today and until Thursday in a picturization of the famous stage success, "Mrs. Dane's Decision."

The story has to do with Felicia Hindmarsh, who, young and lovely, though with a rather haunted manner, arrives by train at a little country station in Canada. The station master directs her to the home of Mrs. Lucy Dane, her cousin, a pretty woman of about 27, who is a confirmed invalid.

The latter is, at the time of Felicia's arrival, very ill, but consents to interview her young cousin who has been abroad for several years. Felicia, who has brought a baby boy in her arms, tries to tell her cousin the story of those years spent in Europe at Vienna.

She tells of having taken a position as governess in the home of the Trents, and of Mr. Trent's unwelcome attention from the very first day. From then the sordid little tale became a tragedy—how Mrs. Trent, learning of the affair, had committed suicide, and how her husband had then lost complete control of his mental faculties and become a raving maniac.

Felicia had tried again and again after her boy was born to make a fresh start, but each time the scandal followed her. Having finished the story, Felicia begs her cousin for aid—and not in vain. The latter arranges to settle a very substantial fortune on her, and in case of her death, to leave Felicia her name as well.

The last we see of her she has returned to the little cottage in Devonshire, and when Lionel seeks her out there she sends him away, turning to her boy for consolation.

A Hearst-Pathe news and other films will complete the program. Thursday and for the last half of the week Vivian Martin will be seen in a picturization of Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett's book, "The Fair Barbarian."

Moore's Strand—"The Little Girl Next Door."

One of the greatest morality photo-dramas ever screened in Washington will constitute the attraction at Moore's Strand Theater the first four days of this week, when "The Little Girl Next Door" will be shown for the first time locally.

In this appealing play, based on the dangers constantly braved by young girls in large cities, the subterranean workings of the vice ring operating throughout the country are exposed. This super-picture was made and presented with the sanction of the Federal authorities, with the consent and co-operation of the police, and municipal officials of the city of Chicago, where many of the scenes were filmed, and has been accorded the whole-hearted endorsement of the clergy and press wherever shown. The vice President of the United States, members of both houses of Congress and the district attorney of Chicago are pictured in some of the scenes which the silent drama discloses.

Moore's Garden—"Her Second Husband."

The first three days of the week at Moore's Garden will bring to the screen the latest Edna Goodrich subject, "Her Second Husband." The star's stunning beauty in this production contributes to the interest of a story built on a hurried divorce, a proud love and the triumph of family ties over business expediency.

In "The Man Without a Country," a film version of Edward Everett Hale's famous story, which will be shown on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the narrative of the man who exiled himself from his native land is modernized to accord with present day views occasioned by the great war. H. E. Herbert is filmed in the title role and is given excellent support by Florence La Badie, his co-star.

This production will be found to be one of timely interest and of unusually high quality and forcefulness. The feature of Saturday's program will be "The Savage," a pulsating film drama of dual personality and the north woods, in which the stellar role is portrayed by Ruth Clifford in whose supporting company will be pictured Monroe Salisbury. This vigorous play of romance and adventure is essentially a picture of the great outdoors and therefore may be relied upon to present scenes of impressive natural beauty and to create that sense of magnitude that only the unbounded North country can.

Brief film features and synchronized orchestral programs will form a part of the daily bill throughout the week, as usual.

Newman Traveltaka.

Newman, Traveltaka, is "doing his bit" during the spring and summer months of 1917, the modern Marco Polo conscripted for his fellow travelers here all of the picturesque features of American life. The "Re-discovery" of America is the title of the series of five brand new Traveltaka to be brought to you at the Belasco Theater for five consecutive Sunday evenings and Monday afternoons, beginning January 8. History's newest notebook—the motion picture—will portray in a harmonious whole for our study, our pleasure and our information, the most beautiful of all the specimens of nature's handiwork. The fascinating picture story surfeited with life and color together with Newman's personal narrative is to be presented as follows: "Our National Parks," "Our Pacific Coast," "Our Real American—the Indian," "Our Hawaii" and "Our West Indies."

Gambling's All Right if You Win, Thinks Hero of Comedy

In musical comedy the wit should be as direct and objective as possible. In Klaw & Erlanger's production of "The Riviera Girl," which will be seen at the National this week, are portrayed a couple who belong to an anti-gambling society in a small Illinois town. They are visiting gay Monte Carlo.

Sam—Don't worry; I'm going to acquire a fighting knowledge of the vice each has risked a few stakes without the knowledge of the other, and the husband, who has a highly developed "system," has lost heavily. This conversation ensues between husband and wife.

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Sam—What about it?

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